

help. He said: "If this act is as bad as you say, we certainly will be in opposition, but I don't presently know one thing about it."

Watt asked me to see Ray Arnett, his Undersecretary, which I did—and he likewise had known nothing about the Act.

The Nation has already paid a heavy price in human suffering and lost opportunities as a result of misguided policies and misplaced priorities adopted in the last 2 years. The recent disintegration of the administration's economic and environmental initiatives are tragic examples of the price we all must pay, now and into the future, for this administration's flare for applying simplistic ideological interpretations to complex public policy issues. This penchant for ideology is particularly dangerous when combined with the administration's difficulty in recognizing what can and cannot be inferred from objective analysis of facts.

Like all public officials actively involved in issues of importance to the agricultural sector and rural America, I have encountered, and probably have made myself some technically inaccurate statements regarding the rate, causes, and consequences of agricultural land conversion. I do not, however, attribute misstatements on agricultural land statistics to an orchestrated campaign to create public concern over a nonexistent problem.

The facts about agricultural land conversion, the limitations of available data on this diffuse national phenomenon, and prudent public policy recommendations to help minimize the loss of agricultural production capacity to conversion are spelled out clearly in detail, and unsensationally, in the final report of the national agricultural lands study (NALS). In addition, sound analyses are presented in the infamous House Republican Study Committee report on agricultural land, and in numerous other books, reports, and articles. For anyone interested in the issue, facts about conversion and reasonable analyses of the consequences of conversion are readily available.

I think it is appropriate at this point to recall some of the basic conclusions in the NALS final report:

A FINAL WORD

As a resource problem, the conversion of agricultural land does not constitute a present-day "crisis," and hence it lacks the equivalent of, say, a gasoline line for concentrating national attention. Nonetheless, it does pose some very serious long-term risks for the United States. In a sense, the issue of protecting agricultural and today is analogous to the energy conservation issue 10 years ago. Looking ahead, we can see a resource problem developing but the immediate incentives for conserving the resource are weak. NALS recommends that the federal government make the protection of good agricultural land a national policy.

BENEFITS FROM RETAINING AGRICULTURAL LAND IN FARM AND RANCH USE

Conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses between now and 2000 will require additional adjustments within agriculture. For whatever level of demand and rate of gain in agricultural production that

materializes, the effects of conversion over time will depend both on the acreage and the productivity of land converted to non-agricultural uses each year. The public and private costs of conversion are cumulative and will persist unless there are significant changes in the demand for U.S. agricultural products or in the rate of gain in average crop yields attained in America and around the world.

A number of benefits from retaining agricultural land for agricultural uses can be anticipated. Preserving productive cropland that otherwise would be converted will help mitigate upward pressure on production costs, and indirectly, consumer food prices. Protecting high quality cropland will also provide farmers and ranchers greater flexibility in conserving soil fertility, strengthen the nation's economy and international standing, and provide greater stability to the annual level of production in the U.S. agricultural sector. Moreover, these benefits will grow as farmers and ranchers move closer toward full utilization of agricultural resources. All things considered, agricultural land protection can be thought of as an insurance policy, one that will provide American farmers and ranchers—and the nation—with broader options to respond to an uncertain future.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress authorizes and appropriates billions of dollars annually for programs addressing poorly defined and inherently uncertain objectives. In the areas of defense, education, research, and environmental regulation, to name a few, it is often very difficult, if not impossible, either to prove what will happen in the absence of Federal activities, or to reliably predict what will happen as a result of a given program initiative. We try to collectively make reasoned judgments regarding our Nation's needs and priorities, and pursue these through equitable and cost-effective programs.

My colleagues know all too well that we are not always able to correctly anticipate future needs, conflicts, and opportunities. A pertinent example is the fact that we continue to spend millions of Federal tax dollars to subsidize development projects on prime farmland, when other land not suited to agriculture is available nearby. We are paying twice for a lack of foresight and prudent planning, once with tax dollars and again in the rising economic costs of producing food, fiber, and other agricultural commodities. Congress responded to this problem by passing the Farmland Protection Policy Act, and I promise to provide the administration with a public forum and ample time to explain the problems it has encountered in its implementation. ●

THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS FOR THE DISABLED ACT OF 1982

HON. CLARENCE D. LONG

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 10, 1983

● Mr. LONG of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, during the 97th Congress, I was pleased to join my colleague Repre-

sentative TIM WIRTH in sponsoring the Telecommunications for the Disabled Act of 1982, to insure that hearing-impaired Americans can enjoy greater access to the telephone network in our Nation.

This bill, now Public Law 97-410, recognizes and begins to address a problem I have been pressing for years—the discrimination that hearing-impaired people suffer in the delivery of telephone services. It is the first step in eliminating this discrimination. My bill, H.R. 210, is the second step.

The critical need for my bill is cogently expressed by David Saks in his article, "Telephones for Hearing-Impaired Americans: The Second Step." I would like to share Mr. Saks' article with my colleagues:

TELEPHONES FOR HEARING-IMPAIRED AMERICANS: THE SECOND STEP

The 97th Congress enacted the first legislation in U.S. history to resolve some of the telecommunications problems of hearing-impaired people. PL 97-410 directs the FCC to assure that three categories of telephones are made compatible with hearing aids: coin-operated phones, phones for emergency use, and phones frequently needed by persons using hearing aids.

This contribution to the well-being of hearing-impaired people is enormous and will be remembered with gratitude. Hearing-impaired people now look to the current Congress to continue this course and take the second step toward eradicating discrimination in telephone service.

Hearing-impaired people, just as surely as non-impaired people, need the universal access to telephone service that is mandated by the Communications Act of 1934. The Act (PL 73-416—47 U.S. Code) declares as its purpose "to make available, so far as possible, to all the people of the United States a . . . communication service with adequate facilities at reasonable charges. . . ." In contrast, PL 97-410 requires only "reasonable access" for those using hearing aids. Is it necessary to argue the point that hearing-impaired people are among "all the people"?

In recognition of this intolerable inconsistency, and in recognition of the need to extend the coverage of PL 97-410, Congressman Clarence Long has introduced H.R. 210. This bill, if enacted into law, will build upon the foundation laid by PL 97-410. It will add one more category to the three that are required to be made accessible. HR210 also answers the major concern expressed by industry: it leaves optional with industry the choice of technologies to be used, so long as the chosen method is equal to today's technology in benefits to hearing aid users.

For years Congressman Long has championed the cause of hearing-impaired people. He has sponsored legislation to make all new telephones usable with hearing aids—everywhere. Hundreds of thousands of hearing-impaired people lead limited lives because they reside in areas where all phones are hearing aid-incompatible. They must live without telephone service. Their lives are unnecessarily restricted—due to the failure of telephone companies in those areas to provide them with usable instruments.

Hearing aid compatible telephones in the United States number 135 to 140 million—living, ringing, communicating proof that telephone/hearing aid compatibility is technically feasible and economically profitable. Testimony by industry and consumer representatives before both House and Senate